

U.S. Application No. 09/775,575

REMARKS

The courtesy of the Examiner in conducting an interview with Applicants' undersigned attorney is appreciated. The substance of the interview is believed to be adequately set forth in the Interview Summary issued by the Examiner as well as in the remarks which follow.

Amendments to the Specification

The specification has been amended on pages 16, 18, 22, 23, 24 and 26 to correct inadvertent numbering errors and minor typographical errors. Moreover, the paragraph on page 22, lines 12-17 has been deleted and moved to page 26, between lines 10 and 11. No new matter has been added by the amendments to the specification.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102(e)

Claims 22-26 and 29-30 again stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Mikurak U.S. Patent No. 6,671,818.

For the reasons set forth hereafter, it is submitted that these claims, as now amended, are patentable over the prior art.

Patentability of the Claims

The claims have been amended to further define that the power plant techniques relate to the operation and/or maintenance of the power plant. This is disclosed in the specification at page 15, lines 9 and 10 and also in Fig. 3. The claims further have been amended to more particularly define first and second web servers and first and second firewalls.

U.S. Application No. 09/775,575

Thus, the claims as now amended, are directed to an answer system in which the customer is inquiring about techniques of maintenance and/or operation of components of a power plant. This concept is completely different from the Mikurak '818 patent which, for example, in the cited passage at col. 22, discusses the reporting of power usage in a residential power supply network. In another portion of the Mikurak '818 reference at col. 125, the delivery of answers provided to frequently asked questions is disclosed using an open access communications network that communicates with a database. Fig. 66 of Mikurak '818 discloses providing answers to frequently asked questions.

In addition, Fig. 116 of Mikurak does show a configuration that includes firewalls. In the present invention, however, there are firewalls with a specified function as set forth in the claims which distinguishes the present invention over Mikurak. The firewalls in Mikurak, show placement of firewalls in the standard manner. By contrast, however, as shown in Fig. 1 of the present invention, an answer system for users is provided between the first firewall and the second firewall and the answer system for the service furnisher is provided behind a second firewall which protects the access to the data maintained by the client component maker so that a user is unable to directly access the techniques which are stored therein. More specifically, the second web server is the one which receives the request from the user and stores them in the inquiry history 72. After that, the second web server accesses the information service furnisher of the power plant maker to provide

U.S. Application No. 09/775,575

answers. In this way, there is no communication link directly between the users and the power plant maker's data.

With further reference to the Mikurak '818 patent, Fig. 116 shows a configuration that includes two firewalls. The configuration of Mikurak, however, is not the same as that presently being claimed by Applicants. See Fig. 1 of the application which shows the internet 3, first firewall 17a, first web server 4 for users and answer system 5 for users and second firewall 17b, second web server 10 for the server furnisher and answer system 12 for the service furnisher, as well as answer center 18 of the service furnisher.

In rejecting the claims, the Examiner has cited plural portions of Mikurak and states that each structural element of the claims is disclosed therein. It is respectfully submitted, however, that the Examiner has interpreted much too broadly each structural element of the claims to make the structure elements thereof allegedly correspond to Mikurak. Applicants claims must be interpreted in view of the functions set forth for various elements.

It is further noted that the Mikurak '818 patent does not show two web servers in the manner of Applicants' invention and therefore Mikurak does not show an answer system for a service furnisher being provided with a processing program for periodically taking in the inquiry information registered in the inquiry information registering means of the answer system for the user as set forth in claim 22. The present invention uses the two web servers which provide the feature of the answer system for the service furnisher being provided with a processing program for

U.S. Application No. 09/775,575

periodically taking in the inquiry information registered in the inquiry information registry means of the answer system for the users.

Accordingly, it is submitted that the claims as now amended, patentably distinguish over Mikurak. Reconsideration and reexamination are respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants contend that the above-identified application is now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, reconsideration and reexamination are respectfully requested.

To the extent necessary, Applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, or credit any overpayment of fees, to the deposit account of Mattingly, Stanger, Malur & Brundidge, P.C., Deposit Account No. 50-1417 (referencing attorney docket no. NIP-216).

Respectfully submitted,

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